

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0301

March 9, 2018

The Honorable K. Michael Conaway
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture
1301 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Collin C. Peterson
Ranking Member
Committee on Agriculture
1010 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Conaway and Ranking Member Peterson,

I write to request that the House Committee on Agriculture hold a hearing to discuss the crisis of sexual harassment and retaliation in the Forest Service and United States Department of Agriculture more generally. Yesterday's resignation of the Chief of the Forest Service indicates that we need to address this matter in a serious and timely fashion. I am deeply troubled that Tony Tooke was brought into a position of leadership, despite ongoing conversations about the need to investigate his alleged sexual misconduct at the agency. Any of these types of allegations within any federal agency should be addressed seriously and quickly.

It is critical for the safety of Forest Service employees that we investigate the culture of the department which has allowed employees to believe that harassment and retaliation are acceptable behavior. It is entirely unacceptable for supervisors to feel they can act inappropriately toward subordinates and fellow employees, and no one should face retaliation for reporting such behavior. I believe we have an obligation to address this behavior and prevent it from ever happening again.

I request that the committee begin planning a hearing on this topic and hold it as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress